

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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O R 012145Z SEP 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7726
THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4107

WHITE HOUSE FOR PHIL WISE AND WHITE HOUSE ADVANCE OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PORG, PBOR, SHUM, ES, HO
SUBJECT: BACKGROUND FOR HONDURAN BILATERAL: HONDURAN TACTICS ON
BORDER ISSUE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4023

1. IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT MOOD OF THE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE,
IT WAS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE BORDER DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR
WOULD BE ONE OF THE MAJOR SUBJECTS GENERAL MELGAR WOULD FEEL COM-
PELLED TO RAISE IN HIS BILATERAL WITH PRESIDENT CARTER NEXT WEEK.
GENERAL MELGAR AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER COULD NOT POLITICALLY AFFORD
TO RETURN TO HONDURAS FROM WASHINGTON WITHOUT HAVING DISCUSSED
THIS SUBJECT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. THAT IS WHAT IS MEANT BY THE
CHIEF OF STATE'S REFERENCE TO BORDER DISPUTE AS A "TEMA OBLIGADO."

2. GENERAL MELGAR AND HIS ADVISERS HAVE CONTINUED TO FOCUS PUBLIC
ATTENTION ON THE FACT THAT ALTHOUGH HONDURAS RATIFIED THE MEDIATION
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AGREEMENT LAST OCTOBER, SALVADOR HAS NOT YET DONE SO. ALTHOUGH
THE GOH IS WELL AWARE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT
HAS ENCOUNTERED IN THE LAST ELEVEN MONTHS, IT HAS SOUGHT TO OBTAIN
PROPAGANDA AND DIPLOMATIC ADVANTAGE OF THIS SITUATION IN AN ATTEMPT
TO INDUCE THE U.S. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO EXERT SOME PRESSURE
ON THE SALVADORANS, AS EVINCED BY HONDURAN VICE FOREIGN MINISTER
CALLEJAS' VISIT TO WASHINGTON LAST MONTH. MOREOVER, IN RECENT

WEEKS THE GOH APPEARS TO HAVE DETECTED SOME ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY IN THE SALVADORAN POSITION ON THE BORDER PROBLEM, AND PERHAPS A GREATER WILLINGNESS TO SEEK A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

3. IN ADDITION TO RAISING THE BORDER SETTLEMENT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, THE CHIEF OF STATE AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DISCUSS IT WITH THE OTHER DELEGATIONS IN WASHINGTON, INCLUDING THE SALVADORANS THEMSELVES. FOREIGN MINISTER PALMA GALVEZ WAS QUOTED IN THE PRESS SEVERAL DAYS AGO AS HAVING TOLD REPORTERS THAT ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS THE POSITION OF THE GOH THAT NO OFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS MAY BE CONDUCTED UNTIL SALVADOR RATIFIES THE MEDIATION AGREEMENT, GENERAL MELGAR AND GENERAL ROMERO MAY DISCUSS THE MATTER "INFORMALLY, " WHEN THEY ARE IN WASHINGTON.

4. IF THIS ANALYSIS IS CORRECT, WE CAN EXPECT THAT THE CHIEF OF STATE AND HIS TEAM WILL ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON WITH A FULL HEAD OF STEAM, PREPARED TO IMPRESS US WITH THE POSITIVE AND CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE THE MELGAR REGIME HAS ADOPTED ON THE BORDER DISPUTE ISSUE, HONDURAS' GOOD RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE PROGRESS THE MELGAR ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. THE HONDURAN DELEGATION WILL REITERATE THE GOH REQUEST FOR HELP IN RESOLVING THE BORDER DISPUTE, AND WILL ALSO EXPECT US TO INTERCEDE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR HONDURAS' NEEDS FOR CAPITAL TO FINANCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. THESE REQUESTS WILL BE MADE NOT ONLY ON THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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OWN MERITS, BUT ALSO ON THE BASIS OF WHAT THE MELGAR GOVERNMENT BELIEVES IT HAS DONE TO ACCOMMODATE ITSELF TO THE FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.

5. AS STATED IN TEGUCIGALPA'S 3699, THE GOH MAY BE EXPECTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE PACT OF SAN JOSE TO GAIN FURTHER SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITION ON THE MEDIATION AGREEMENT WITH EL SALVADOR. IT IS CLEAR THAT FROM THE BEGINNING HONDURAS HAS SOUGHT TO LINK THESE TWO ISSUES, I.E., RATIFICATION OF THE MEDIATION AGREEMENT AND RATIFICATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY. ALTHOUGH THE GOH HAD RESOLVED NOT TO RATIFY THE LATTER UNTIL SALVADOR HAD RATIFIED THE FORMER, THE GOH CHANGED ITS MIND AS A RESULT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S RECEPTIVITY TO THE REQUEST CONVEYED BY THE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT THE U.S. PLAY A MORE ACTIVE AND DIRECT ROLE IN THE BORDER DISPUTE NEGOTIATIONS. THE TIMING OF HONDURAS'S RATIFICATION OF THE PACT OF SAN JOSE, ON THE EVE OF THE CHIEF OF STATE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE TACTICS BEING EMPLOYED BY THE GOH, WHICH IS FULLY AWARE OF IMPORTANCE THE U.S. ATTACHES TO HUMAN RIGHTS. ON THIS ISSUE AS WELL AS OTHERS, HONDURAS CAN CONDUCT ITS POLICY FROM STRENGTH, SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD CONTRASTS FAVORABLY WITH THAT OF EL SALVADOR.

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